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PROMULGATION OF BUDDHIST LAWS AND DECENTRALISATION: A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO BUDDHIST MONASTIC CODES

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It is obvious that the Buddha never made it difficult for anybody to enter into the Buddhist Order or made it difficult to be followed by the entered members, as he promulgated the rules with the best wishes for the Order and its members. It can be seen in the promulgation of Buddhist monastic codes in the *Pātimokkha* and its *Vibhaṅga*. Concerning this, S. Dutt points out that the Buddha, the promulgator of laws, was not any historical figure but only the conceptual embodiment of the formal sources of all Buddhist laws and doctrines (*Early Buddhist Monachism*, 1996). Venerable Wapola Rahula also comments that the Buddha never thought of controlling the *Saṅgha*, nor did he want the *Saṅgha* to depend on him (*What the Buddha Thought*, 1959). It is the principle of individual responsibility that the Buddha consents his disciples to get freedom in Vinaya promulgation. On this ground, it is necessary to examine how the Buddha formulated his laws and managed his followers who lived in scattered locations. This research theoretically examined the promulgation of monastic codes and demonstrated the Buddha's decentralisation and its resultant advantages. As the study approach, a textual analysis was done with the limitation of the *Pātimokkha* and its *Vibhaṅga*. Following this method, I examined the promulgations and constitutions of Buddhist laws, and illustrated the decentralisation of Buddha and his elder disciples as well. As a result, it could be asserted that for the entire Order there would be several benefits of decentralisation in the promulgation of Buddhist monastic codes, which are not just own personal adjudications of the Buddha as a leader, even though he was the overall leader of the entire Order.

Keywords: Buddhist laws, *Saṅghā*, Promulgation, Decentralisation, and Benefits